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A CHESTNUT BUR.*

WHAT it was called eight and thirty years ago was the Andover Fuss, and that is just what it is to-day. It has sturdily outlived a generation, and it shows no sign of decadence. We shall see the last of earth before earth will see the last of the Andover Fuss.

It is lasting, because it is everlasting. Seeming only an ecclesiastical quarrel about an unpractical point, it is the successive bursting of burs that marks the ripening of successive kernels of truth. And while the kernel must ripen, or the fruit of the tree of life fails, it must not be forgotten that the bur does good work in holding fast the precious seed till moved by the internal and eternal force to loosen its life-long grasp.

But while there is the same old drama, the actors have changed parts. The villain of the last generation has become the hero of this. Professor Park was the Newman Smyth of 1849. Professor Park is gathering up the weeds and grass of 1849. He is now gathering up the weeds and grass and stones that were flung at him forty years ago, and shying them at Professor Smyth with as hearty a good will as if he did not know how they felt when they first hit, or how useless they were as an argument against the truth.

Even the foolish men who edit newspapers and Reviews and think people are not interested in theology ; and the foolish public who give them reason to think so, to such a degree that every theological paper appearing from this pen may be considered as representing a fierce war and a bloody victory over an obstinate editorial foe, even they could not but be entertained and edified,

* "The Andover Fuss ; or, Dr. Woods versus Dr. Dana, on the Imputation of Heresy against Professor Park, Respecting the Doctrine of Original Sin." Boston : Tappan & Whittlemore. 1853.

"A Review of Dr. Dana's Remonstrance of September, 1849." Boston : Press of Crocker & Brewster. 1853.

"The Associate Creed of Andover Theological Seminary." By Edwards A. Park. Boston : Rand, Avery & Co. 1883.

"The Andover Trial." Boston : Cupples, Upham & Co. 1887.

by reading these time-stained pamphlets. Exhumed from boxes beneath the eaves, they are still glittering with the sarcasm, moist with the tears, and red hot with the wrath evoked by the derelictions of Professor Park when he presided over the Seminary whose head has just been cut off, although it refuses to roll into the basket. Every charge of breach of trust, logical inconsistency, dangerous error brought against Professor Smyth to-day was brought against Professor Park forty years ago. All that is not appalling is amusing in the spectacle of this heretic of the last generation, absolutely forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto the heretic of to-day with the same unwieldy old blunderbusses that fired their vain volleys at him. That it is a Holy War does not prevent the tactics from being grotesque.

In their time, the old formulas did good service, but the world moves—moves in the evolution of religious truth just as really and rapidly as in the evolution of material truth. Flint and steel marked a momentous invention. The doctrine of election, in politics and in theology, was a great advance over hereditary transmission of saving grace and sovereign power. But to take the doctrine of election out of history and present it to the world as a nugget of unrelated truth is just as absurd as it would be to declare flint and steel the one divinely appointed method of kindling the domestic hearth.

Then, as now, the piece of toughest resistance was the Westminster Catechism. “If there are words in the English language which can make anything plain,” protested the remonstrants against Professor Park in 1849, “the Founders have made plain and undeniable their intention that the doctrines of the Assembly’s Catechism, and no other, should be maintained, defended, and propagated through the instrumentality of their Seminary.” But, under Professor Park’s deft hand, original sin and other related doctrines prove to be an altogether different grist from that which came out of the Westminster hopper. Just as heretic Smyth is charged with the “stupendous crime” of breach of trust, the beloved Park aiding and abetting the charge, so did the world, the flesh, and the devil nag Professor Park in 1853. How can the Professor reconcile his position with the principles of moral integrity? On the one hand, distinct and explicit declarations of doctrinal belief, and pledges to teach in accord-

ance therewith, and, on the other hand, a course of teaching apparently contrary. There must rest a painful feeling of mis-giving, lest in his ardent love and pursuit of philosophical speculations he may have forgotten what is due to those high principles of uprightness which ought so manifestly to govern all the professors in the Seminary that every question respecting it should be wholly precluded.

Professor Park is of too large a nature to lay to heart little grievances of this sort. Volunteers never resent the petulant cry of "foul" when Thistles lag astern. In his noble forgetfulness he now declares that if an official doubt of his allegiance to the Creed had ever been intimated, "I should have regarded the intimation as an insult to me and as an implied charge of prevarication!"

"I am afraid" said President Lincoln, to a friendly judge who was giving an account of his proceedings at the nominating convention, "I am afraid, there, you prevaricated a little."

"Prevaricate!" cried the too ardent judge, "I lied like ——!"

And beyond and above any crime charged upon Professor Smyth, this conservative of to-day but iconoclast of yesterday, was accused of having repeatedly stamped the articles that he rejected "with ridicule and exposed them to public scorn." And I am afraid he did! I am sure that when he saw the bur splitting it was not in him to press it together, but rather to join forces with the interior expanding truth and hasten its release by the keen thrusts of his playful and polished but powerful wit.

On the face of it, those theological Forty-niners had Professor Park on the hip exactly as Professor Park has President Smyth on the hip now. Each alike had to avow on the day of his inauguration, and, to prevent a subsequent breaking away, every five years thereafter, his faith in the Westminster Catechism.

To prove Professor Park's heresy, the remonstrants quoted from his sermons such words of wisdom and righteousness as make the yellow pages of my garret rubbish thrill with living fire. Why is Professor Park training in the old camp when his own words show that he belongs with the New Departure, falsely so called? Newman Smyth, Dean Stanley, never struck a truer note, never gave a clearer exposition of the proper method of Bible interpretation and the common errors of exegesis than does Professor Park in these heretical and Heaven-taught sermons. Every page is crowded with insight, discrimination, the all-com-

elling eloquence of lucidity. It is inexplicable that his opponents did not give in to their truth at once. It is inexplicable that pulpits should still be found preaching the dead and petrified method of interpretation when, for these forty years and more, Professor Park has been so illuminating the living way. It is a freak of nature that Professor Park himself, in his vigorous and magnificent age, should turn upon Professor Smyth for following in the footsteps of his splendid and stirring prime.

Professor Park is the most brilliant as well as the most delightful man in the world. He is always brimming over with mischief—using the word “for true heart, and not for harm.” It must be that as his work is well done he cannot help playing. Walking up and down the beautiful greenery wherein, like gems, are set his house and all the Saints’ houses and haunts of the Andover School of the Prophets, he spies Professor Smyth, remote, unfriended, melancholy, gliding out from the shadows of Brechan Hall; and instantly grabs a wisp of “speculations” and handfuls of “moral integrity” and “German rationalism” and lets fly at him for pure fun, as who should say, “See here, young man, if you think it is a fine thing to step into my shoes and be a progressive theologian instead of a stationary one, take this—and this—and this, and see how you like it!”

The Hon. Chauncey Depew has, in the most charming, that is, in his usual manner, announced himself to be of his mother’s faith. He could not do better, but if he will lay aside for a day the roar and bore of his trumpery railroads, and will read these four pamphlets, he will know more exactly what his mother was taught to believe, what she could not believe, what she did believe, and what it behooves him to believe, than, I suspect, he has yet discovered. He would then and thus certainly contribute more to our upbuilding in his holy faith, and there can be but one reason why he would not himself grow in grace—that he is already as graceful as theology can make him.

Just as unprogressive theology casts longing glances back from the aggressive incursions of present thought to the good old times when Professor Park held fast the form of sound doctrine, so did the stationary of the last generation bemoan themselves for the Golden Age of the good Dr. Woods, when the Westminster Catechism was in its glory of unquestioned supremacy. The doctrine of Original Sin, including the personal guilt of each and

every individual of the human race, in all successive ages to the end of time for its commission ; and the just desert of and liability to everlasting punishment in hell, by one and all of the posterity of Adam, for their violation of the law of God, imputed to them as their own transgression, *done by them in him*, their antecedent representative and covenant head, this good old wholesale doctrine, not whittled down by reason, but officially guarded and transmitted by Professor Park's model predecessor, Dr. Woods, this doctrine the remonstrants of 1849 declared to be the touchstone of New England orthodoxy. No doubt a great host outside of New England orthodoxy will agree with them and gloat over it with unseemly mirth.

But I, who gather within myself the strictness of eight generations of New England orthodoxy, am justified therein by finding that Dr. Woods says nothing of the sort. Dr. Woods, so far from setting his hand and seal to such American irrationalism, left on record a theology worthy of his grandson, the late Rev. John Cotton Smith, beloved and lamented Rector of the Church of the Ascension in New York ; worthy of the gracious presence and noble promise of his great-grandson, the youthful Rector of the Church of St. Peter in Beverly, Mass. ; worthy even of his great-great-grandson, the most reverend of all, John Cotton Smith, of the Church of the Holy Innocents, whose theology is yet undefined, but was certified by the Redeemer of the world as entitling him to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Behold what Dr. Woods saith : "Every attempt which has been made to prove that God ever imputes to man any sinful disposition or act which is not strictly his own has failed of success. . . . I say, with the utmost frankness, that we *are not entirely satisfied with the language used on this subject in the Assembly's Catechism*. Though we hold that Catechism, taken as a whole, in the highest estimation, we could not with a good conscience subscribe to every expression it contains in relation to the doctrine of Original Sin. Hence *it is common* for us, when we declare our assent to the Catechism, *to do it with an express or implied restriction*. We receive the Catechism *generally* as containing a summary of the principles of Christianity. But that the sinfulness of our natural fallen state consists, in any measure, in the guilt of Adam's first sin is what *we cannot admit*." And all the people said Amen !

Here, then, we have the striking spectacle of a group of solid New England Christians conscientiously striving to oust Professor Smyth because he cannot keep step on the Creed with Professor Park; and we go back thirty years and find another group of saintly men trying just as hard to oust Professor Park, because he could not keep step with Dr. Woods on the Catechism, and we go back thence twenty years, and find that Dr. Woods made no pretence of keeping step at all. He made the march right loyally, but he deliberately proclaimed from his mountain-top, the wide world over, that the Catechism was often out of time, and that he and his comrades made no scruple of marching to their own music.

Professor Park finds that Professor Smyth has softened down the everlasting penalty of the creed into everlasting possibility, and Dr. Dana mourned that Professor Park had softened down the Original Sin of the catechism into a "series of intense expressions." But Dr. Woods, to whom we are directed as the standard, made short work of both Creed and Catechism, and taught the common sense doctrine that Original Sin is the Sin that originates with every man. Why must Professor Smyth shut out all the light let in by Professor Park in the last generation, and by Dr. Woods in the preceding generation, and contract his pupils to the gray twilight of Westminster Abbey?

Professor Park says that it is because he only revolted against the "*summarily* expressed" doctrines of the Catechism, whereas Professor Smyth flies out from the traces on those doctrines as "*particularly* expressed" in the Creed. His statement is as convincing as William Lloyd Garrison's avowal of fatherly impartiality when he used to declare that he loved all his children alike, especially Fanny! The great Professor balancing himself a tiptoe on that slender adverb and calling aloud to Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy to behold on what

"A narrow neck of land
Twixt two unbounded seas I stand!"

seems a very Blondin of acrobatic theology. But we of the weak and wicked world—no Blondins, but craving Eternal Life—must have the solid rock beneath our feet. And that Rock is Christ. Presented to us under a thousand figures, he was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, the Divine Word, the Redeeming Reason, God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world to himself.

GAIL HAMILTON.